

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan Pays Official Visit to the Russian Federation

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan flew into Moscow on 4 April for a brief official visit to Russia.

On the same day, he was invited to an informal dinner hosted by former Russian Prime Minister Evgeni Primakov, currently a member of the blue-ribbon High-Level Panel on global security threats and reform of the international system, or the Panel on Change. The dinner was held in a warm atmosphere and was attended by a number of the Secretary-General's colleagues and friends. Given the fact that UN Special Representative for Georgia Heidi Tagliavini was among those present at



President Vladimir Putin expresses to Kofi Annan his country's steadfast support for the United Nations and the Secretary-General's effort aimed at reforming the world body

the event, the post-election situation in that Caucasian country was touched upon, amid other things.

In line with a long-established tradition, in the morning of 5 April Mr. Annan laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He then proceeded to a meeting with the newly-appointed Prime Minister, Mr. Mikhail Fradkov. In particular, the Secre-

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tary-General informed his counterpart that he looked forward to receiving

the female part of the audience – that perhaps a future Secretary-General was in that hall now, and “she” would look back fondly on her experience.

and the zone of Georgia/Abkhazia conflict. The Secretary-General hailed the President’s recent statement on HIV/AIDS at the Duma. The issue of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Russia was also raised. The Secretary-General thanked Russia for securing the release of the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) aid worker, Arjan Erkel, abducted in Dagestan in 2002.

Mr. Annan then had a working lunch with Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Sergei Lavrov. Both had a brief encounter with the press in its aftermath.

The Secretary-General’s last official meeting was with Mr. Igor Ivanov, Secretary of the National Security Council, in a first ever visit to the advisory body by a UN Secretary-General.



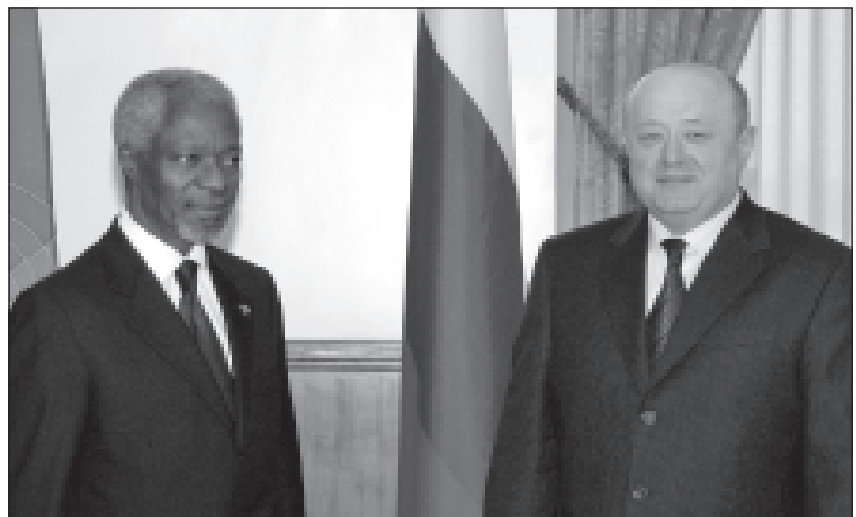
Mr. Annan lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

ing a report by the High-Level Panel on change and expressed hope that UN Member States would muster the political will necessary to live up to its recommendations with a view to adapting the world body to confront key challenges of the day, including conflict prevention and management, elimination of weapons of mass destruction, poverty eradication and global fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The parties discussed, among other things, Russia’s collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Europe. It was indicated that Russian businesses had a growing interest in fostering corporate responsibility in a manner encouraged by the Global Compact.

On his part, the Secretary-General said he was alarmed by a dramatic increase in the HIV/AIDS infection in Russia and called for a pro-active attitude by the government in responding to this challenge.

The highlights of Mr. Annan’s Moscow sojourn also included a visit to a Model UN Conference, which counted among its participants some 1,800 high school and University students from all over Russia. He addressed them briefly, saying – to the delight of



The UN Secretary-General meets with the Russian Prime Minister, Mr. Mikhail Fradkov

In the afternoon, the Secretary-General was received by President Vladimir Putin for an unexpectedly long meeting that lasted more than an hour and a half. The President expressed his country’s steadfast support for and confidence in the United Nations. He also said the Secretary-General’s effort aimed at reforming the world body had his full backing.

The discussion initially focused on three important topics – Iraq, the Middle East and Kosovo. They then turned to the situation in Afghanistan



Mr. Annan and Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Sergei Lavrov during their encounter with the press

Problems of the Indigenous Peoples of North – through the Prism of the UN Millennium Goals

There are 45 small indigenous nations living in Russia; 35 of these, numbering more than 200 thousand people, inhabit 28 regions of the country's North. The international conference "Problems of the Small Indigenous Peoples of Russia's North – through the Prism of the UN Millennium Goals" was dedicated to their future. It took place on April 15 at the Russian Academy of Public Administration.



Presidium of the conference "Problems of the Small Indigenous Peoples of Russia's North – through the Prism of the UN Millennium Goals"

The organizers of the conference – the Podruga ("Girl Friends") club of politician's spouses, the League of Small Nations and Ethnic Groups, and the Senatorial Club of the RF Federation Council – invited legislators, experts, representatives of international and nongovernmental organizations, and journalists to the conference.

Having conveyed the greetings of Federation Council Chairman Sergei Mironov, his deputy, Alexander Torshin, declared the conference open.



Alexander Torshin

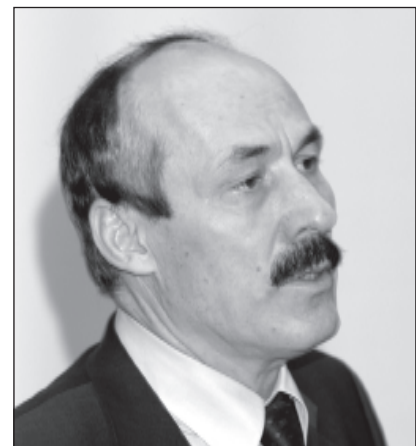
The development of market reforms in Russia, he hinted, has exacerbated a number of serious problems among the small indigenous nations. Their level of unemployment is seven times higher than that overall in the regions where they live; 17% of their people are completely illiterate, and their average life expectancy is 49.



Stefan Vassilev

In his address to the conference, Stefan Vassilev, UN Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative

in the Russian Federation, noted that questions of the survival and development of small indigenous nations are topical not only for Russia but for the entire world. He reminded his audience that leaders from all over the world in 2000 accepted and signed the Millennium Declaration that set the Goals for international development; the first among these was combating poverty. They are entirely pertinent to the problems of small indigenous nations. The proclaimed UN International Decade of the World's Indigenous People ends in 2004. "We hope," Mr. Vassilev emphasized, "that consolidating the efforts of all interested Russian and international private and governmental agencies, charity foundations, and nongovernmental organizations, and that of the business community, will help in solving the socio-economic problems of the small indigenous nations of the Russian Federation."



Ramazan Abdulatipov

In a forceful, emotional speech, Ramazan Abdulatipov, Member of the Federation Council and Chairman of the Association of Russia's Nations, revealed that only 20% of the funds earmarked by the government for dedicated programmes to sustain the small nations reach the regions.

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The situation among the young people of the northern nations is catastrophic due to alcoholism, from which 80 percent of them now suffer.



Sergei Ryabukhin

Sergei Ryabukhin, an auditor from the Accounting Chamber, shared Abdulatipov's concern for the future of the indigenous peoples: infant mortality in the northern regions is 1.7 times higher than the average across Russia.

Natalya Zubarevich, Dr. of Geographical Sciences at Moscow State University, devoted her speech to an analysis of the objective trends in the development of indigenous nations. The North is divided economically, with incomes differing widely from region to region. There is therefore no unified strategy of development, nor can there be: the

nations' standards of living are simply not comparable. Thirty percent of their population receives government funds, ten percent of them through housing and public services that are paid for by the state. Employment and salaries are growing in the areas of management, culture, health care, and education; in the regions, this happens only where there is oil or a paternalistic local government. Employment and salaries are falling in agriculture and industry, which means that the economy is assuming an increasingly parasitical character. Women predominate in the structure of employment: they account for 55–60% of all employees in most regions, while men are more likely to be self-employed. Gender equality in poverty is also becoming a fact. With the exception of the "rich" autonomous regions, the North is stagnating. The state of the peoples of the North is determined not by the rate of economic growth in a region, but by the level of its economic development; this is a long-term trend.

What can be done? The men must be helped to create and develop the infrastructure for obtaining and processing

the products of the traditional economy, while women must be helped to earn money within the public economy.

The Evin Project is designed to help the young people of the indigenous nations to better adapt to current conditions and develop an active life strategy. A presentation of this project, which is being implemented in the Evenkii Autonomous Region by the Podruga spouses' club with the support of the Child Rearing Institute of Psychology and Pedagogy, was done at the conference. Having endorsed the project, those attend-



Coordinator of the TACIS programmes of the Commission of European Community Burny McNally talks to a conference participant

ing proposed granting it the status of federal dedicated programme.

Those participating in the conference adopted a resolution calling for the quickest possible adoption of the Concept for a State Policy of Supporting the Development of the Small Indigenous Nations of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. They also suggested that a nationwide conference of small indigenous nations be held in August and September 2004 as a way to properly end the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.



Participants of the conference acquaint themselves with samples of hand-crafted items produced by the peoples of the North





Humanitarian Community Monitors the Closure of IDP Camps in Ingushetia

On 1 March, Bart tent camp for IDPs from Chechnya was officially closed in Ingushetia. Some IDPs were relocated to temporary settlements in Ingushetia, others returned to Chechnya. The Federal Migration Service had announced the closure of the camp several weeks before, and according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the closure went smoothly. Alternative shelter in temporary settlements in Ingushetia was offered to IDPs not yet willing to return to Chechnya, and IDPs were aware of their options to stay in Ingushetia. Many IDPs chose to return to Chechnya in hopes of receiving compensation for the destroyed housing.

On 14 March, the Deputy Head of the Federal Migration Service, General Yunash, signed an order on the closure of Sputnik tent camp by 1 April. According to UNHCR, far more IDPs from Sputnik (about 50%) have opted to move to temporary settlements in Ingushetia than to return to Chechnya, as compared with the closure of Bart camp (some 23%). Migration Service and Chechen government officials have been undertaking campaigns to

pressure IDPs to leave the camp. And although the closure of tent camp Sputnik went far less smoothly than the closure of Bart camp, no forced returns were confirmed by UNHCR monitors or protection officers, which have been in the camp on a daily basis. While the authorities continued exerting psychological pressure on IDPs persuading them to return to Chechnya, IDPs were offered a possibility to relocate to alternative shelter in Ingushetia, and all utilities were functioning in the camp until the last day. Some IDPs had resettled to barracks at Rassvet IDP settlement, which the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) built a year ago and which the authorities had not allowed to use until February. Many IDPs that were ready to return to Chechnya were on the waiting list to receive box tents from UNHCR in order to move into the private sector in Chechnya. In the meantime, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) arranged for the relocation of several tents from Sputnik to Rassvet to provide additional education capacities for children there as the existing school in Rassvet was already overcrowded. An agreement was reached with local migration authorities on the relocation to Rassvet of a children's centre, which UNICEF, together with Caritas Internationalis, had operated in Sputnik.

According to Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Ella Pamfilova, head of the Presidential Commis-



Vesta NGO monitor interviews IDPs in Sputnik tent camp

sion on Human Rights, stated that without outside pressure, IDPs from the two remaining tent camps in Ingushetia would likely not return to Chechnya earlier than May or June. This is in contrast with multiple statements that tent camps will be closed in the very near future. In early March, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights issued a report on the refugee crisis in which it recommended that «the same type of compensation must be offered to all internally displaced persons who have lost their housing and property, independently from their decision to return to Chechnya or not.» It also called upon authorities to ensure that people seeking refuge from Chechnya are given forced migrant status and have the opportunity of finding shelter in other areas of Russia. On 25 March, the United States Mission to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe made a statement underlining two principle problems preventing the return of IDPs to Chechnya: the dangerous security situation and the lack of housing in the republic. The statement urged Russian federal and local authorities “to support volun-



Rassvet IDP settlement, built by the NGO “Médecins Sans Frontières”

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tary returns to Chechnya and to provide alternative shelter to IDPs who wish to remain in Ingushetia.”

In the remaining IDP tent camp Satsita the situation is calm though

representatives of Chechen and Ingush authorities have started going around the tents informing IDPs that they had to take decisions in two weeks, as the camp would be closed by May. UN office has not received any official information about the closure of the camp. Ac-

cording to the UNHCR database, about 2,000 IDPs were registered in Satsita in the middle of April. The United Nations will continue monitoring the voluntariness of the returns of IDPs to Chechnya as well as verifying the availability of alternative shelter in Ingushetia.



Appointments

Mr. Kasidis Rochanakorn Appointed the New UNHCR Representative in the Russian Federation



Mr. Kasidis Rochanakorn was appointed the new Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as designated Humanitarian Coordinator for the United Nations in the Russian Federation.

Being a professional UN staff Mr. Rochanakorn started his career in UNHCR in 1979 in his native city Bangkok, Thailand.

Later he worked in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, was UNHCR Chief of Mis-

sion in China and Regional Representative in Japan and Republic of Korea. He served twice at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, the last time, from 1996 until 1999, he was the Chief of Emergency and Preparedness Section.

A graduate with honors of three universities, in Thailand, Philippines and USA respectively, majoring in mass information and political sciences (M.A.).

Married with two children.

Microsoft Supports Refugees in St. Petersburg



“ We try to be a very modern organization. We know that we serve the people, to UNHCR concern, better when we practice modern technology ”

Ruud Lubbers, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR is working to empower some of the world’s most vulnerable and dis-

advantaged people through education and training programmes. But the agency can not do it alone. UNHCR develops co-operation with the private sector to benefit



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UN in RUSSIA



from knowledge, research or expertise within companies. Business can also help UNHCR to draw increased attention to the refugee cause. In this sense, the Microsoft Corporation is an essential partner for UNHCR.

In 2003, the Microsoft Corporation signed a long term partnership agreement with UNHCR to establish Community Technology Learning Centers for refugees. Under this agreement on 15 April UNHCR, the St. Petersburg Regional Branch of the Russian Red Cross and Microsoft opened one of such centers for the first time for refugees and people with disabilities in St. Petersburg. The center will serve both local disabled people as well as refugees from 44 countries who have found temporary safe haven or have already integrated in St. Petersburg. The center will assist both groups to realize their potential through information technology. Support for Community Technology Learning Centers is a key element of the Microsoft's global investment initiative, Unlimited Potential.

Apart from constant and long-term advocacy work and training for officials to improve the implementation of the refugee law, UNHCR provides legal counselling and basic assistance for asylum seekers and refugees. There are over 6,400

asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as Moscow and Leningrad regions from Afghanistan, the Middle East and various African countries that are deemed to be

in need of international protection. UNHCR provides through its implementing partners social and psychological counselling, basic medical care, assistance in integrating children in local schools, small-scale vocational skills training for

adults asylum seekers, the Russian language classes, etc. The St. Petersburg Regional Branch of the Russian Red Cross, UNHCR implementing partner, has provided computer literacy courses to adults' asylum seekers using the facilities of one of the computer classes in the city. This work will be expanded now through cooperation with the Microsoft Corporation.

As of 31 December 2003, there were 8,725 recognized refugees in the Russian Federation, including 362 people from non-CIS countries, of which 346 are Afghans. Out of this number 82 refugees are residing in St. Petersburg and Leningrad region. In addition, 1,232 people – mostly Afghans – have been granted temporary asylum.



For your UN file

International Days

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 23 April | World Book and Copyright Day |
| 3 May | World Press Freedom Day |
| 15 May | International Day of Families |
| 17 May | World Telecommunication Day |
| 31 May | World No-Tobacco Day |

Implementation of the UNESCO Programme “Education for All”

UNESCO Moscow Office invited National Coordinators of the “Education for All” Programme from the cluster countries to hold the consultation seminar on implementation of EFA National plans of actions in Moscow, Russia, 23–24 March, 2004. EFA National Coordinators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and the Russian Federation have attended the seminar.



“A framework for the planning and financing of EFA is now in place. National commitment is still the key to success. This seminar will provide a unique opportunity for EFA National Coordinators to show the quality, range, and diversity of our educational plan, and accomplishments,” said Director of the

UNESCO Moscow Office, Mr Philippe Quéau. “We look forward to working with all levels of government, private and public sectors to make EFA plans a success story in our region.”

This seminar also provided an excellent forum for expanding knowledge, interpersonal exchanges, and increased international understanding within the cluster. Moldova (Larisa Virtosu and Mihai Paiu) has exhibited the excellent National Strategy for EFA, which was developed with UNESCO support and adopted by the Government in 2003. Armenia (Nune Davtyan) has been successfully implementing the education plan with support of World Bank. Russia (Alexei Talonov) is implementing an ambitious national plan for modernization of the education system. Belarus (Nikolay Lis) has strong commitment to reach all Dakar goals. Georgia (Tamaz Tatishvili) has highlighted some problems that put obstacles in the way of successful implementing of the national plan.

During the seminar, there was organized the training session on extra-

budgetary projects on EFA by Mr. Svein Osstveit, Coordinator of Extra-budgetary Projects of UNESCO Educational Sector. At the end of the meeting it was proposed to organize such consultations for EFA National Coordinators regularly, at least once a year.

In order to promote the goals of EFA Programme – completion of primary education, gender equality, early childhood education, skills for young people, fighting illiteracy and improving all aspects of the quality of education in the cluster countries – UNESCO Moscow Office is seeking the opportunities to support an existing mechanisms of regional and sub-regional forums of ministers, conferences, round tables and seminars. In line with this requirement UNESCO Moscow Office will held several meetings, including the sub-regional conference on TVET (June 2004, Moscow), Experts meeting on Secondary education policy (October 2004, Minsk), International Workshop on ECCE (November 2004, Chisinau) and Conference of CIS Education Ministers (2005).

Perm Authorities to Promote Tolerance

An International Conference “The Role of Local Authorities in Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination” was carried out in the town of Solikamsk (Perm region of the Russian Federation) in March 16–17, 2004. The event was held at the initiative of the Legislative Assembly of the Perm region with the support of UNESCO. The meeting aimed at sensitizing Perm region local authorities to the promotion of human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, to the development of human rights education and sharing best practices implemented in the region.

According to the recent sociological research Perm region is the leading one in Russia in terms of maintain-



The participants of the Conference “The Role of Local Authorities in Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination”

ing intercultural, intercommunity and interethnic dialogue.

The Conference contributed to in-depth exchange of information in regard to UNESCO in general and two UNESCO Strategies in the field of Human Rights and Struggle against Discrimination, adopted by the 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference last year.

The participants among which were Mr. Devyatkin, the Chairperson of

Perm Legislative Assembly, Mr Sukhikh, the Vice-Governor of the Perm region and Mr. Bogdanov, the Mayor of Solikamsk, UNESCO experts, local teachers and human rights defenders discussed manifestation of xenophobia in the post-Soviet space, paying particular attention to the role of local authorities in combating intolerance and exclusion. Among the participants were also representatives of law enforcement bodies including the local penitentiary system.

Full text of the report will be available at www.unesco.ru by the end of April 2004.

The local administration proposed that the meeting should be reconducted biennially.

UNESCO expresses its gratitude to the local administration and particularly to Mr. Victor Baranov and Mrs. Nadezhda Shilkova (“Solikamskbumprom”) for the local initiative and great hospitality.

Social and Intercultural Aspects of Migration

An International Conference "Migration: Social and intercultural aspects of Sustainable Development" was held at the auspices of UNESCO with the support of the UNHCR, International Migration Organization and the Federal Migration Services of the Russian Federation in the State University of Management in Moscow in March



Anatoly Porshnev, the Rector of the University of Management

10–11, 2004. The Conference gathered prominent scholars and experts on migration issues from Russia, other CIS countries and Baltic states, Europe, representatives of the international organizations, Council of Federation of Russia, Federal Migration Service, federal ministries and non-governmental organizations.

The objective of the Conference was to work out recommendations on the methods and mechanisms of tackling burning problems of contemporary migration in the standpoint of promoting tolerance and sustainable development in the modern society. The scientists and (practicing) experts discussed the irregularity of demographic processes at regional level, the regulation tools for managing migration flows under a difficult demographic situation, the causes of hard life conditions of migrants,

their integration into society, situation of young migrants.

The particular attention of the participants has been paid to the issues of combating migrantophobia, ethnic and religious intolerance, forming tolerant attitude towards migrants, promoting rights of labour migrants and members of their families. The participants called upon the further improvement of the legislation in the sphere of migration in Russia and the other CIS countries, the elaboration of effective measures to facilitate the transformation of illegal migration into legal to prevent brain-drain.

The participants adopted a resolution, which is a good basis for handling the problems related to migration in CIS countries. To get the full text of the final document together with the major reports, please visit www.unesco.ru

World Forum on Human Rights: 16–19 May, Nantes

Dedicated to the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition the World Forum on Human Rights was carried out in the memory of Mr Sergio Vieira de Mello, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights killed in Baghdad in August 2003.

The Forum brought together repre-

sentatives of all actors involved in the promotion and protection of human rights from all over the world. The Forum gave the participants the possibilities to share their experience and knowledge, establish new contracts and create networks in order to face pressing challenges of modern world, such as terrorism, discrimination and poverty.

All interested organizations were invited to take part in the Forum.

For more detailed information concerning the World Forum on Human Rights please read the next issue of “UN in Russia” as well as visit Internet sites:

www.forum-humanrights.org
www.unesco.org/shs/human_right

Iodine Deficiency Threatens Russia



*Iodine can not be clever.
It's you who can be clever*

On March 26, a round table dedicated to the problem of iodine deficiency in the Russian Federation was held at the UN Information Centre in Moscow. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) organized this discussion that was moderated by Alexandre Gorelik, Director of the UN Information Centre. Taking part were representatives of the State Duma, the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, Ministry of Health and Social Development, associations of salt producers and consumers' societies, international and non-governmental organizations.

The participants were consent that the whole population must have access to iodine, this vital micronutri-



The participants are deeply concerned about grave consequences that iodine deficiency can cause among the Russia's population

ent. Basing upon the latest available scientific and practical knowledge they noted that otherwise iodine deficiency would occur. Depending on its degree iodine deficiency among the population can vary from some loss of national intellectual capacity, to endemic goitre and even – to cretinism.

Addressing the audience, the UNICEF Representative for the Russian Federation and Belarus Mr Carel De Rooy cited a book published in 2003 entitled "IQ and the Wealth of Nations", by Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen. The authors found that national IQs are correlated at 0.76 with real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita. The book also looks at the relation between national IQs and the growth of per capita GDP from 1950 to 1990. The correlation is 0.64.

There is an obvious positive relation between mean IQ of the population and economic wealth of the nations.

Meanwhile, the debate's focal point became that of mandatory salt iodization. Some of the participants were afraid that universal salt iodization would not take into account possible deterioration of health of those people who are overly sensitive towards iodine

substances. They asked: would mandatory salt iodization not deprive these people of the right to choose this product based upon medical recommendations?

Their opponents responded, that iodized salt contains extremely small amounts of iodine (that are still sufficient to cover daily requirements in this micronutrient). Cases of "over-sensitivity" towards iodine in iodized salt have never being reported. According to the World Health Organization' data, iodized salt is a safe product and can be consumed



A round table on iodine deficiency is held at the UN Information Centre

by everyone without any medical recommendations, indications and contraindications.

The other participants expressed their concern about using of iodized salt that would have negative effects on certain foods. In their turn, the champions of mandatory salt iodization agreed, that this could be true for salt fortified with potassium iodide. However, since 1999 only potassium iodate is used by the salt industry for salt fortification in the Russian Federation. Extensive studies and vast experience show that salt with potassium iodate has no negative effects on foods. In some cases, such as bread baking, iodated salt is even beneficial for quality of products.

The Lost Victory?

The UNICEF Representative for the Russian Federation and Belarus Mr Carel De Rooy agreed to answer some questions from "UN in Russia" correspondent after the round table on iodine deficiency had been completed.



– What is the situation concerning iodine deficiency in Russia today?

– First, most of the Russian population is exposed to some degree of iodine deficiency. Second, in some remote regions extremely severe manifestations of iodine deficiency (cretinism) were found. Third, while present in big cities (Moscow, St. Petersburg and others) iodine deficiency is generally more prevalent in rural areas. And at last, iodine deficiency is more prevalent in Eastern regions (Asia) than in the Western (European) part of the Russian Federation. Looking back, we can call the present situation “the lost victory”.

– Why?

– One hundred years ago, in 1904 Nikolay Lezhnev published the first book on endemic goitre in Russia. He then concluded that “goitre has an important national significance and fighting goitre is of vital importance”. Fifty years ago O. Nikolaev pioneered salt iodization as the most efficient method of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) control.

The Soviet State understood the strategic implications of Lezhnev's and Nikolaev's findings. Perceiving endemic goitre as a national health problem it developed a comprehensive nationwide system of goitre prevention based on large scale produc-

tion and supply of iodized salt. By 1966 over 900,000 tons of iodized salt were being produced annually and distributed in the Soviet Union. As a result, between 1950 and 1978 endemic goitre was practically eliminated mainly through targeting of iodized salt to endemic areas. However, these achievements were not sustained because iodization of salt for human consumption was not mandatory.

In the 1980s the production of iodized salt started to decline and in 1997 its availability in the Russian Federation fell only to 4% of the total requirement; by 2003, it had increased to 35%.

– How does it threaten the population?

– Several studies in different regions of the Russian Federation in the 1990s indicated nationwide presence of iodine deficiency with goitre prevalence above 10% which is the internationally accepted level at which a population-wide lowering of the intellectual capacity between 10% and 15% is likely to occur. It is important to note that iodine deficiency remains the single greatest cause of preventable mental retardation in the world.

– And what about other countries?

– Most European countries have iodized salt available, but in about half its use is only voluntary. Mandatory salt iodization exists in Austria, Denmark, Poland, Czech and Slovak Republics, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. In some developed countries (UK, Norway, Sweden, USA, Canada) most of iodine comes from meat, poultry and dairy products as iodine is an essential component of animal's fodder. More iodized salt is now consumed through processed foods that more important source of iodine nutrition than in less developed countries. However, growing amount of countries (Italy,

Spain and the Netherlands) are considering mandatory iodization of all salt for human consumption.

– Recently you addressed the State Duma supporting the draft law on mandatory salt iodization. Why do you consider important to approve it right now?

– President V. Putin emphasized two main priorities for his second term in the office: doubling of national GDP over the next 10 years and fighting poverty. One could say that the President plans not only to enhance economic growth, but also to translate economic growth into human development. There is no better way of starting this process than with the extremely low-cost and high impact initiative embodied in the law that is before us.

Recent research performed by National IDD Center and Academy for Educational Development (USA) revealed that if nothing is done to reduce iodine deficiency, the Russian Federation will lose over 44 billion rubles worth of future productivity due to IDD in the next five years alone. However, if iodine deficiency is eliminated through USI one can expect to gain of 11 billion rubles in future productivity. Comparing these economic benefits with the cost of salt iodization (2 rubles per person per year) the benefits exceed the cost by a factor of 15.

Moreover, by eliminating iodine deficiency in pregnancy, 200,000 newborns will be saved from brain damage by 2006.

Roughly three quarters of the 89 regions in the Russian Federation have expressed themselves in favour of this law. Population of rural areas and the eastern, more remote, portion of the Russian Federation and particularly the children would benefit most with the enacting of this law. The law is also a fundamental step to transform the Russian Federation into an economic world power.

Young People Helping Young People



Katya Tsvetkova (second from the right): “At *Rovesnik*, we think up special games that develop you and help you to learn”

It occasionally happens that what's new is something that was long and well forgotten. Although new times inevitably bring change, it makes no sense to dismiss whatever useful experience has been accumulated. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, youth organizations virtually ceased to exist, and teenagers who were actively setting out in life and seeking their own way and place were left all alone. It was no accident that at that time a number of nationalist and even fascist-like organizations began to make themselves known. Their leaders knew how to take advantage of the situation and were able to attract a considerable number of young people.

In the Russian Federation, one of the aims of UNICEF's Young People's Health and Development programme is to support the development of the Equal to Equal youth movement. The programme's tasks include supporting already existing youth clubs and organizations, information and resource centers, and youth-oriented mass media, and making their accumulated experience widely known.

In St. Petersburg, one of UNICEF's oldest and most reliable partners in

carrying out this program is the Centre for the Prevention of Drug Addiction. UNICEF deals directly with one of the Center's subdivisions, the *Rovesnik* (“Peer”) youth club.

The club opened in 1999; since then, more than 150 people have taken active and permanent part in its work. They form the backbone of the club and are its very foundation. Each of them has signed an official agreement with the club, guaranteeing that his or her parents know where their child goes everyday after school.

Another thousand young people can be added to this 150; that's how many are involved in the area of *Rovesnik's* activities. What exactly do they do?

The teens participate in creative workshops, theater, extreme sports and wilderness adventure; they play videogames and the like and compile information for the mass media. Through their own example, they show others an alternative way: how they can live happily and with hope for the future, and be free of drugs. At awareness sessions for the preven-

tion of drug addiction, they tell the guests who come to the club how safe it is for them to help a friend who is on drugs. They also talk about how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS.

“All these things are joined together by a desire to help a kid build a harmonious relationship with himself and the world around him,” says Marina Orlova, the coordinator of the programme Peer to Peer. “At the club, the kids feel as though they're successful and capable; they free themselves of the anxiety that they don't know anything and don't matter to anyone. Right now, young people are strongly oriented toward making money, and we obviously have to take this into consideration. At the same time, you can't reduce everything to just money.”

For a year now, a group of youngsters from *Rovesnik* has been going twice a week to Children's Home No. 26, not far from the Mariinskii Theatre. Katya Tsvetkova, Vadim Nikitenko, and other teens from the club feel perfectly confident there. They sit on stools among the children from the home and start to talk, not in a hectoring tone, but in a considered and pointed fashion. The youngsters exchange their impressions of how the day went, what's new, and how everyone feels. This is what the children from the home are often deprived of most: genuine attention from others and interest in their daily lives, and the opportunity to share their worries and joys.

Fifteen-year-old Galya Lakhtinen and her 13-year-old brother Lyonya found themselves at the children's home last year after their mother died. Galya admits that the attitude toward kids from the home at the school they go to leaves something to be desired. The teens from *Rovesnik* have gradually managed to restore her confidence that she, her brother, and the other boys and girls at the home can be interesting to the world around them.

At the initiative of *Rovesnik*, the children at the home put on the play *The Wall*, about the invisible barrier that separates the home's residents from the rest of the world and how to overcome this barrier. Helping to stage the play were workers of the NGO *Podval* ("The Cellar"), yet another of UNICEF's partner organizations, who had made the trip from Moscow. Such exchanges take place as part of UNICEF's general programme, as do joint training sessions and expeditions.

Katya Tsvetkova has plenty of friends at the home. She is 14, and is in the 9th grade at St. Petersburg's Public School 171.

She was brought into *Rovesnik* by her older brother Daniel. "When I came here for the first time, I was really surprised," says Katya. "Before then, I thought that only complete orphans wound up in a children's home, and it turned out that the parents of almost all the kids here are still alive but have lost their parental rights. I prepare for our meetings; I think carefully about

what games we're going to play, about what I shouldn't forget to ask. At *Rovesnik*, we think up special games that develop you psychologically and help you to learn."

Katya always tries to suggest a new game, even though the kids ask to play "Crocodile" every time. All the players – travellers – have to climb up on chairs set in a row and, in saving themselves from the two man-eating crocodiles that remain on the floor, make it across from the chairs to a safe island at the end of the room. If they don't help one another, the razor-toothed crocodiles will inevitably drag off one of the expedition's members. The whole trek then has to begin over. The game teaches them to function



There are fewer and fewer kids who want to play the role of a crocodile. They all want to be the intrepid explorers

as a team and to understand and help one another. Incidentally, each time there are fewer and fewer kids who want to play the role of a crocodile. They all want to be the intrepid explorers.

At *Rovesnik*, everyone believes that one shouldn't put off until tomorrow what one can do today: one has to help others make their lives more interesting.

Every Breath Counts – Stop TB Now! World TB Day 2004

Since 2000, for the fifth time, the World TB Day activities were held in the Russian Federation. Initiated by the WHO TB Control Programme, the campaign has become a tradition and has driven feedback from different organizations involved in TB control in Russia: in-

ternational agencies, non-governmental organizations, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, State Duma of the Russian Federation, the leading TB research institutes and Moscow TB Center.

This year's World TB Day campaign was aimed at infusing a sense of urgency in TB problem and building greater societal commitment for the TB movement. In so doing, the theme of this year: "Every Breath

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Counts – Stop TB Now!” was addressed to the public at large, civil society and the media.

The World TB Day 2004 campaign gave impetus to a wide range of activities.

This year’s press conference facilitated closer and more direct engagement and partnership-building with journalists and media agencies. More than 35 news agencies, TV channels and radio stations covered the press conference held on the premises of the Russian News Agency

efforts in fighting TB.

School students from 37 regions across Russia and students of TB boarding schools made TB-related posters that were exhibited in the Central House of Architect, the venue of the charity concert on the occasion of the World TB Day. The winners of poster contest received



More than 35 news agencies, TV channels and radio stations cover the press conference held on the premises of the RIA “Novosti”



The rock concert under the World TB Day slogan gathers the youth from Moscow

“Novosti” on 19 March. The WHO TB Control Programme in the Russian Federation in cooperation with the Russian Journalists’ Union, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Russian Red Cross announced the contest for journalists that will be competing for excellence in reporting TB-related issues, thus bolstering wide publicity and facilitating greater debate on the issue of TB countrywide. The federal 1st TV channel aired the report on the press conference in one of the well-known TV news programmes “Vremya”. Leading radio stations broadcasted roundtable discussions, where prominent TB specialists appeared as advocates calling for intensified

their prizes during the Awards ceremony. Russian Red Cross nurses were raising donations to support TB control activities.

Young TB specialists presented TB-related scientific papers to wide audience of the scientific and practical conference initiated by the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences. The presenters received certificates and the authors of the best papers were awarded the prizes.

The rock concert under the World TB Day slogan gathered medical students and the youth from Moscow and suburbs in “Samolet Bowling” club on Sunday, 28 March, united that night by the call to fight TB.

Those who took part in contests on the occasion of the event were

presented with the World TB Day souvenirs.

This year joint efforts of the WHO TB Control Programme in the Russian Federation, national and international partners made social advertising in Moscow metro possible. Six billboards on the way to Domodedovo airport were placed to raise awareness and promote behaviour and attitude change of the general public.

This year’s World TB Day campaign has driven the effective feedback from mass media, health providers, opinion leaders and community, being the rewarding outcome of joint efforts undertaken by agencies involved in fighting TB in Russia.



The charity concert on the occasion of the World TB Day is held in the Central House of Architect



WHO No Tobacco Initiative



Dr Galina Sakharova

At present it has become obvious to the whole world that tobacco smoking is the reason for many serious diseases, which may lead to death. Millions of people on the planet absorb toxic substances, which are contained in tobacco smoke. This leads to 300,000 deaths every year in Russia and 4 million – in the whole world, i.e. every 6 seconds somebody dies on the planet from diseases caused by tobacco smoking.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has determined the problem of tobacco control as a global problem for the whole world and has become an initiator of many large-scale activities, which lead to the decrease of smoking and improvement of the health status of the population.

One of the most important WHO initiatives is the creation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which was unanimously approved on May 21, 2003 by the 192 countries – WHO members, including Russia. FCTC is the first worldwide agreement related to human health, which is an important step of the global strategy aimed at the decrease of mortality and disease rates caused by tobacco.

co. Quitting smoking is a complex process, in the course of which many smokers need support and medical care. The WHO approach to tobacco smoking as to a chronic disease, during which not only nicotine dependence develops but also, as a result of systemic influence of toxic substances contained in the tobacco smoke, practically all the human organs and body systems are affected, facilitates successful medical solution of this problem. WHO utilizes a comprehensive approach to the problem of smoking, therefore along with the development and implementation of evidence-based methods of treatment for tobacco dependence, assessment of the smoking status and of the desire to quit smoking should be performed, as well as regulation of the means of treatment for tobacco dependence and circulation of tobacco goods, promotion of smoking-free zones, informing the smokers about the health-hazardous influence of

smoking. WHO is the initiator of world-wide dissemination of the “Quit smoking and win” activity. “Quit smoking and win” is an international programme aimed at quitting smoking, the goal of which is to unite a large amount of people in order to quit smoking within a certain period of time. During the implementation of this activity both medical and social support is provided for people who refrain from smoking, and they are encouraged to give up smoking completely. As statistic studies have shown, 15 to 25% of the people who take part in the activity refrain from smoking during one year, which is a very high figure and proves the effectiveness of this activity. It is expected that about 1 million smokers from 70 world countries will take part in the programme in 2004. Russia has also joined this activity, the results of which will be reviewed on May 31 – the World No Tobacco Day.

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World Health Organization (WHO) works with others to improve the health of population, by helping Member States. WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations with 192 Member States. WHO Headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland. The European Regional Bureau is in Copenhagen, Denmark.

WHO has four main functions:

- to give worldwide guidance in the field of health;
- to set global standards for health;
- to cooperate with governments in strengthening national health programmes;
- to develop and transfer appropriate health technology, information and standards.

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Blood Safety Issues – Preventing HIV/AIDS

The rapidly increasing pace of newly reported HIV infections in Europe, and the current estimation of 1.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS as of end 2003, added a growing concern for increasing safety and availability of blood and blood products. It outlined the need to support implementation of comparable quality standards in the blood transfusion service in all member states, and prevent transmission of the disease.

A safe and adequate blood supply requires an integrated strategy and WHO has outlined several key issues, including national coordination of the blood transfusion service, with functional quality systems, collection of blood from voluntary non-remunerated donors (low risk populations), screening of all donated blood for HIV and other blood born pathogens, reduction of unnecessary transfusions at the clinical site.

Consistent evidence proves that voluntary non remunerated blood donation stands for the cornerstone of blood safety. The issue of payment, either in cash or in kind, affects the reliability of the donor selection process, with tight links to infectious risk. If HIV prevalence in blood donations has declined regularly over time in Western Europe, to 1.3/ 100.000 donations, the pattern is completely reversed while moving towards the East. HIV prevalence has increased alarmingly to >30 (up to 90)/ 100.000 blood donations in Eastern Europe, where national blood supply is based on paid or replacement donations.

Well developed strategies to promote healthier and safe life styles, especially with regard to the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, are parts of the public health interventions to motivate voluntary non-remunerated blood donation. And

an especially important target audience is young people.

In 2004, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion have been joined by the World Health Organization in organizing the World Blood Donor Day, on 14 June. This day will focus on encouraging and recognizing the need and social importance of low-risk, voluntary non-remunerated blood donors, that give blood regularly. By focusing on youth, it is hoped that a new generation of blood donors will be encouraged to follow their example, providing a safe blood supply to save lives.

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Library of Health Reform Projects “ZdravInform” www.zdravinform.ru

“ZdravInform” is an internet-based information resource of the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation supported by the Moscow Office of the World Health Organisation.

“ZdravInform” provides open access to the results and materials from completed and ongoing health reform projects in the Russian Feder-

ation presenting detailed picture of the latest developments.

The information made available in this library is directly provided by donor organizations, the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation, health authorities involved in the implementation of the project and foreign implementation agencies.

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